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**Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem
and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory**

Security Council
Seventy-eighth year

Identical letters dated 5 December 2023 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Silence in the face of the human calamity being deliberately inflicted by Israel, the occupying Power, on the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip – the dead and wounded, dismembered and disabled, missing and orphaned, homeless and displaced, traumatized and grieving – is unconscionable, it is a stain on the global conscience and the responsibility of all who are watching and doing nothing to stop it.

Israel's aggression on Gaza “now ranks among the worst assaults on any civilian population in our time and age”, as stressed by the Norwegian Refugee Council chief and former Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Jan Egeland, and yet, the Security Council still fails to unequivocally demand a ceasefire to halt the bloodshed and to uphold its primary duty to maintain international peace and security through the peaceful resolution of conflicts?

The international community cannot continue to accept sloganeering and lies as the response to the calls upon Israel to respect international law, including its obligations as the occupying Power under international humanitarian law. The facts speak for themselves. To those who may believe Israel's false claims that it is “doing everything possible to minimize harm to civilians” in Gaza, they need look no further than the body count of nearly 2,000 Palestinian children, women and men killed, the more than 3,000 injured and the massive destruction in southern Gaza in the past four days alone since Israel resumed full scale its aggression against our people that has never ceased for a single minute.

The international community cannot allow Israel to continue making a mockery of the law and of any person or country who stands up for it. Non-compliance demands action by the Security Council, by the General Assembly, by the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice and by all States. Obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, including the Genocide Convention, are clear and must be upheld.



How can the Security Council accept that its resolutions are spat on by Israel? The Council's demand in resolution 2712 (2023) that "all parties comply with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law, notably with regard to the protection of civilians, especially children" cannot be treated as a mere suggestion; it requires consequences in the face of blatant violation. Millions of lives are at stake, as is the Council's credibility and no less than regional and global peace and security.

The horrors we witness as the world allows this Israeli war on our defenceless people to carry on are too many to recall, too gruesome to describe. The spokesperson of the United Nations Children's Fund in Gaza, James Elder, has stressed: "I feel like I am running out of ways to describe the horrors hitting children here. I feel like I am almost failing in my ability to convey the endless killing of children here".

The death toll in Gaza has now far exceeded 16,000 Palestinians, that is, 1 of out every 200 people in Gaza. More than 7,000 children and 5,000 women comprise the majority of victims, many crushed to pieces and burned beyond recognition. The wounded have surpassed 41,000 people, thousands struggling to survive, countless whose limbs have been amputated. Over 7,500 civilians remain under the rubble.

Even those who serve to save lives – doctors, medics, humanitarians – all are systematically targeted by the Israeli occupying forces. In recent days, another medic, Osama Tayeh, who became known to his colleagues at the Palestine Red Crescent Society as "the children saver" for his heroic efforts to save wounded children, was himself killed in another Israeli strike on Jabaliya. Perhaps he was also one of thousands of victims of the artificial intelligence systems Israel is using to "select the targets" to attack, targets that are actually homes, United Nations shelters and hospitals, where thousands of civilians who had fled from the north in search of safety in the south are now being murdered in cold blood, cynically marketed as "sophisticated use" of artificial intelligence by the occupying Power.

Who will protect those who are trying to protect and save children and innocent civilians from harm? When will the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions step up to their responsibilities in the face of such grave breaches of the humanitarian laws created to protect civilians from such horrors?

It is an undeniable fact: nowhere is safe in Gaza from this Israeli killing machine. This has been acknowledged by United Nations officials and international humanitarians from across the world, again exposing Israel's lies about minimizing Palestinian casualties. Israel's actions speak louder than its crass exploitation of words in the English language to cover for the war crimes and crimes against humanity it is perpetrating in this genocidal assault against our people.

Confronted with this unbridled savagery, Palestinian civilians are once again on the run, somehow trying to find refuge in a place where no man, woman or child is safe. Now, three out of four people in Gaza, a shocking 80 per cent of the population, have been forcibly displaced, amounting to more than 1.8 million people. Many families have been uprooted twice and three times in just two months, moving from the north to the south of Gaza and now again desperately trying to protect their families from Israel's attacks.

Thousands more people have crammed into already overflowing United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) facilities, where 1.2 million Palestinians are sheltering and which lack the minimal humanitarian infrastructure and supplies to provide minimal basic needs. Hunger, dehydration, disease and squalor are creating a toxic mix with the fear, grief and despair that families are experiencing as a result of the trauma and terror being wreaked by Israel. As cautioned by the President of Médecins sans frontières

(international), Dr. Christos Christou, “These strikes are also hitting overcrowded, squalid refugee camps, where people are barely surviving on the sparse humanitarian aid available. If the bombs do not get them, infectious diseases and starvation will.”

Now it is being reported that another 600,000 civilians in southern Gaza have received evacuation orders from Israel and are being forced to do so as the bombs and missiles rain down on them. The Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, and the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the Occupied Palestinian Territory have respectively cautioned: “There is nowhere to go as shelters, including of UNRWA, are beyond & over their capacity”, and “Nowhere is safe in Gaza and there is nowhere left to go”.

Still, Israel continues to press for so-called “safe zones”, attempting to concentrate millions of people in ever smaller areas lacking any civilian infrastructure, including shelters, basic human necessities and any semblance of safety. What should we call such high concentrations of civilians under the threat of slaughter? How can the international community remain paralysed in the face of such endangerment of human life and blatant ethnic cleansing and forced transfer?

The situation is both chaotic and catastrophic. Some civilians, however, are deciding that they will not heed Israel’s orders to leave their homes and shelters in the south. As expressed by Halima Abdel-Rahman, a widow and mother of four children who had fled her home earlier in October and had taken shelter with relatives in an area outside Khan Younis: “The occupation tells you to go to this area, then they bomb it The reality is that no place is safe in Gaza. They kill people in the north. They kill people in the south.”

It is the duty of the international community to protect her family and protect the Palestinian civilian population as a whole in Gaza and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as there is no law that Israel has not breached, every single humanitarian law and every single human rights law violated deliberately and systematically with no regard for civilian lives. Israel has proven over and over again that it has abdicated its obligations as an occupying Power and is the source of the extreme insecurity and suffering of Palestinian civilians captive under its illegal colonial, apartheid occupation. The international community must step in and step up to its responsibilities.

As stated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, “The time to change course is now. Those that choose to flout international law are on notice that accountability will be served. No one is above the law.”

Israel must be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. States are obliged by international law and human morality to act without any further delay to bring an end to this travesty of justice and to enact concrete measures of accountability, including an arms embargo, in response to the war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power. The Palestinian people cannot be left to the mercy of the Israeli war machine and its psychotic leaders, threatened with death and maiming or mass deportation from their homes and lands, without recourse to international protection, including by the laws created to protect all peoples.

Israel’s war on our people in Gaza has been called, inter alia, a “war on children”, “an all-out assault on civilians”, “incessant and indiscriminate warfare”, “like a horror movie”, “an affront to the human conscience” and “a crisis of humanity”. It begs comprehension how anyone can think that continuing this bloodshed and destruction can bring safety to any child, Palestinian or Israeli, or any other people in the world, when such abhorrent precedents are being created. As stated

by The Elders: “If the world can watch this scale of brutality and suffering and not prevent it, we have lost our common humanity.”

Israel is spreading death and ruin across Palestine and destabilizing the entire Middle East and must be stopped. Failure to act will have even more grave repercussions than we have already witnessed in these dark days. Continued complicity with these crimes cannot be justified or excused.

We thus reiterate our calls on the international community, foremost the Security Council, to act now to ensure an immediate ceasefire and international protection of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, where Israel’s occupying forces, including terrorist settler militias, also continue to kill and destroy upon the direct orders of Israel’s leaders, as well as to ensure an end to the siege of Gaza and the collective punishment of the Palestinian people and urgent, sufficient and sustained humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering caused to our people by this catastrophic and inhumane Israeli war and to save human lives.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 818 letters on the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 ([A/55/432-S/2000/921](#)) to 1 December 2023 ([A/ES-10/972-S/2023/946](#)), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations against our people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) **Riyad Mansour**
Minister
Permanent Observer